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FEATURE MATERIAL

Questionnaires were sent to 19,830 permit holders to determine hunter participation and size of the kill. An analysis of these questionnaires showed that almost 50 percent of the hunters requesting and receiving permits did not go hunting. The approximate 111,000 active teal hunters took 404,710 blue-winged teal and 39,610 green wings. The kill of blue wings was twice the number killed during the previous year's regular season in the two Flyways.

The active hunters averaged slightly more than 4 ducks each for the short season.

The wing survey determined the ratio of green-winged to blue-winged teal in the bag. It also showed that a much larger number of young blue-winged teal was taken than older birds. The ratio was two young birds to each adult in the bag, indicating good production of blue-winged teal in 1965.

Male blue wings predominated in the bag, particularly for adults. This was especially true in Texas, where nine adult males were bagged for each adult female. During the regular hunting season, females predominate because males migrate earlier. The experimental season harvested some of the male blue wings that normally escape the regular hunting season. A greater proportionate harvest of males is desirable because they are not as vital for heavy summer production, Gottschalk said.

A third study was conducted during the experimental season. This particular study was made only to gather information. Bureau and State personnel spent 2,181 hours observing teal hunters. This hunter-performance study indicated an illegal kill of 13,000 wood ducks, 7,000 mallards, and 14,000 ducks of miscellaneous species. Approximately one-half million wood ducks are normally killed each year during the regular season.

How the additional hunting pressure will affect teal populations is still unknown, Gottschalk added. Blue-winged teal have a high natural mortality and the additional kill may have taken many birds that normally would have died of natural causes. The Bureau is planning additional studies to see how much of the kill during the special season was added to, or subtracted from, natural die-off.

"Although there is room for improvement in the ability of hunters to identify ducks before shooting, the illegal kill during the experimental season was not great enough to affect other species adversely," Gottschalk said. "This season demonstrated the opportunity for providing additional hunting if sportsmen are willing to learn waterfowl identification."

The 20 States that participated in the experimental early teal season were: Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and those portions of Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming that lie east of the Continental Divide.

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